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20 February 1984

SAN FRANCISCO
GAYS SUE CIA FOR SECURITY CLEARANCE
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The traditional belief that homosexuals -- in or out of the closet -- are automatic security risks in government and the defense industry is being challenged in a $1 million suit against the CIA.

John Green, 50, an electrical engineer at TRW Corp. in Torrance, Calif., sued after his five government security clearances were lifted when he admitted he was gay -- and ''not a closet case.''.

''I thought I had been granted security clearance for my integrity, not my lifestyle,'' said Green, who had worked on classified intelligence projects for 12 years for the aerospace company.

Green had a 21-year exclusive relationship with his first partner and has been with his second for 4 years, he said.

He said the CIA discovered he was gay when his partner, a co-worker, applied for a security clearance in 1981 and listed Green as a reference. An investigator asked Green if he was gay and he answered ''yes.'' He said his security clearances were promptly suspended.

Official notice of the revocation cited ''hidden homosexuality, which made him susceptible to blackmail,'' which Green said meant he was demoted from a department manager to a staff engineer, ''pushing paper around.''

His federal court suit, seeking $1 million in damages, names CIA Director William Casey and Security Director William Kotapish as defendants.

The CIA maintains homosexuality is a relevant factor in considering applications for access to classified material. Agency officials believe that homosexuals are a likely target of blackmailers, especially if they look for sex with unknown partners in questionable places.

Granting security clearances to such individuals might endanger national security, said CIA spokesman Dale Peterson in Washington.

In a case similar to Green's, Richard Gayer of San Francisco last month sued the CIA and President Reagan for thwarting his 1982 effort to obtain security clearances necessary to perform a job at GTE Corp. in Mountain View, Calif.

Lack of clearance means he is likely to be fired by the end of March, he said.

''The question is not whether you are a target of blackmailers,'' Gayer said. ''The question is whether you're going to succumb.

''Anyone with a security clearance is a potential target, but anyone who is open about his homosexuality is not very susceptible to blackmail.''

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